



*"Serving the 7th Legislative District is an honor and a privilege. To best serve you, I must hear your thoughts, so please do not hesitate to contact me."*

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**Senate Standing Committees:**

- Environment, Energy & Water, Ranking Republican;
- Natural Resources, Parks & Shorelines

**Special Committees:**

- Legislative Transportation Committee;
- Joint Task Force on Rural Land Use and Economic Development;
- Joint Select Committee on Water Policy;
- Western Legislative Forestry Task Force, past Chairman;
- Select Committee on Forest Resources

## 2002 Legislative Preview

# Bob Morton

WASHINGTON STATE SENATOR • 7th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Dear neighbors:

2001 was quite a year. Just when we thought we had begun to recover from the earthquake, the energy crisis and the drought emergency, we were hit with tragic events that considerably dwarfed those problems.

At no time in our nation's great history have we been forced to deal with such devastation. Although the tragic events of Sept. 11 were not physically a direct attack upon us here in the Northwest, they definitely hit home.

Nathan Hays, a young Marine from our 7th district, was one of four Marines killed in the recent plane crash in Pakistan. He was a graduate of Wilbur High School and, along with his parents, contributed greatly to community life.

To Nathan's family, and all the other families whose lives have been changed by Sept. 11 and the resulting war, my thoughts and prayers are with you.

So where do we go from here? We must show our strength — our strength as individuals, our strength as families, our strength as a state, and our strength as a nation. As difficult as it may be, we must go on with our lives and we must get back to work. As your elected state senator, for me, that means continuing the business of the people.

This legislative session, I go to Olympia with an even greater appreciation for the freedoms and liberties afforded to us under the U.S. Constitution and the process by which we govern our great nation.

This session, the Legislature faces some significant challenges with the dramatic downturn in the economy, the passage of another tax-cut initiative, and resulting decline in state revenues. We must reassess the state budget and, in so doing, protect essential government services without tax increases. Transportation also remains a priority as we look to provide relief for our state's commuters and freight.

Rest assured, I will continue to represent you and to serve the 7th Legislative District to the best of my ability.

Cordially yours,

Sen. Bob Morton

## State Budget

As you may know, during the 2001 session, the Legislature approved a \$22.8 billion state operating budget. At the time, I expressed grave concerns that the budget was not sustainable as our economy even then showed signs of a slow down. Short of deep cuts in state services and spending down all of our reserves, our only option would be to increase taxes. I voted against the budget last session for this very reason.

Our nation as a whole is

struggling with a downturn in the economy, and the events of Sept. 11 have only encouraged that economic decline. Massive layoffs in the aerospace and high-tech sectors have made people even more cautious about spending, and consumer confidence is at its lowest level in years.

Over 55 percent of our state revenues are generated by sales tax and, with a strong economy over the past several years, the state has not been forced to make

difficult budget decisions. The declining economy and resulting reduction in consumer purchases will inevitably lead to those tough decisions.

Our challenge during the 2002 budget discussions will be to find ways to make up for a potential \$1.5 billion shortfall. I expect these difficult decisions to be quite a challenge. I will work to see that essential services are maintained without tax increases.

## Canadian Lynx

Several weeks ago, we learned that two employees at the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, along with five employees from two federal agencies participating in a 3-year Lynx study, were involved in submitting false fur samples of the protected species to the laboratory.

Many questions have surfaced as a result, both ethical and practical. Studies like this lead to the restriction of land and expensive habitat restoration projects — impacting me and you. Why then, would one of our state agencies be so quick to use false samples?

Many in the Northwest are still out of work because of the spotted owl and currently, all of us in the Northwest are impacted in some way by those very restrictions and expenses in response to the protection of endangered salmon.

As a result of this deception by one of our state agencies, some of my fellow colleagues and I requested that a joint natural resource committee hold hearings so that all

information behind this act could be aired in public. The public has a right to know why state employees used false samples of a protected species. The chairman agreed and the hearing took place on January 16.

I was not at all satisfied with the information attained during the hearing and have requested that the chairmen of the committees convene an investigative committee with subpoena powers. Without being able to question the employees involved, the people of our state will never truly know what happened.

For the most current information on this, please contact my office.

## Education

Last session, the Legislature addressed Washington's teacher shortage with a program for alternative routes to teacher certification.

Alternative certification could really make a difference in the efforts to reduce class sizes. Sixty-five new teachers have already come on board with alternative certification. Although this may

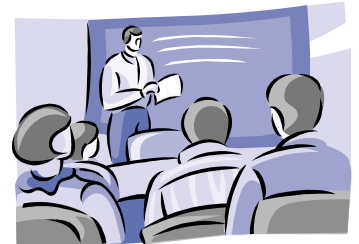
seem like an insignificant number statewide, it is just a start. In fact, on the Professional Educator Standards Board website, thousands of people have expressed interest in alternative certification. Since

August, the site received approximately 4,700 hits to the question,

"Do you qualify for alternative routes?" and over 2,000 indicated they qualify.

If you are interested in becoming a teacher and would like to find out if you qualify for alternative certification, visit the Professional Educator Standards Board website at: "<http://www.pesb.wa.gov/AlternativeRoutes/AlternativeRoutes.htm>"

If you do not have access to an on-line computer, contact my office, and I would be happy to send you the materials.



# Transportation

Transportation is largely what kept the Legislature in Olympia for several additional months last year.

## Public Involvement

If the people of Washington are going to be asked to pay for a major transportation fix, we must include them in the decision-making process by

The public wants to be a part of the process!

placing the measure on a state funded ballot — a significant provision left out in last session’s transportation package.

Seventy-five percent of all residents who participated in the 7th Legislative District transportation questionnaire indicated that they want the opportunity to vote on any package passed by the Legislature. The public wants to be a part of the process! They want to know where their tax money is going and what it will accomplish.

Last session, the Legislature was not able to come to agreement on a plan that would have provided public involvement while improving the quality of transportation equally on both sides of the state.

## The Plan

Whatever the plan is, it is going to cost money. Again, 73 percent of those who participated in the transportation questionnaire indicated that they did not support an

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increase in the gas tax to pay for transportation improvements, and 76 percent indicated that, if placed on the ballot, they would be inclined to vote against the current legislative proposal.

## The Divide

What’s even more interesting is that a vast majority of the people who participated in the questionnaire believe that the transportation interests of the rural parts of Washington are often pitted against the transportation interests of the urban areas of our state.

It is clear that our region is not interested in paying to relieve the gridlock in the Western urban parts of our state — especially when our area is one that can least afford it. The per capita income in King County exceeds

\$40,000 per year, whereas the per capita income in Ferry County is just over \$16,000.

It is clear that the region with the most transportation troubles can most afford to fix their own problems.

## Where will we go

Transportation will remain a priority this session, and for future sessions, until we come together on a package that satisfies the needs of

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the rural highway system as well as it does the urban highway system of the state. Rest

assured, I will continue to advocate the needs of rural Washington and encourage public involvement throughout this process.



Sen. Morton speaks during a committee hearing at the state Capitol in Olympia.

# Capitol Tours

Interested in traveling to Olympia to visit your state capitol? Don't miss the opportunity to take a tour. Tours are not limited to the Capitol building itself, but can also include the Temple of Justice, and other buildings on the capitol campus.

Scheduling a tour is easy — just call or e-mail my office and let us know when you will be in town.

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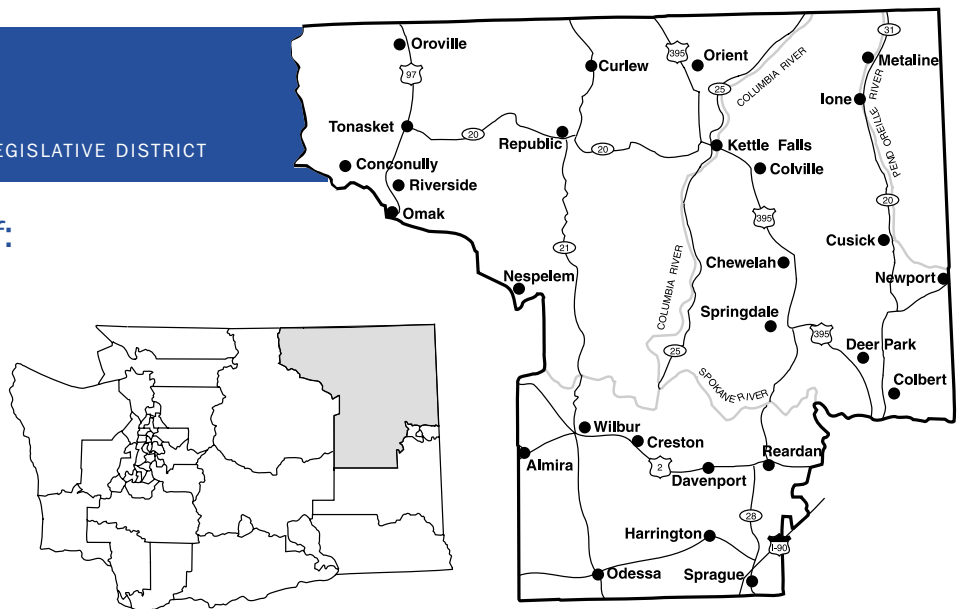
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## Bob Morton

WASHINGTON STATE SENATOR • 7th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Representing the people of:

- Pend Oreille
- Stevens
- Ferry
- Lincoln
- Okanogan and
- Spokane counties



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**Bob Morton**

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